

The Conduit of Research

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Hau Hagedorn
OTREC

Communicating the Value of Transportation Research

By Marci Kenney

TRB's National Cooperative Highway Research Program (NCHRP) Report 610: Communicating the Value of Transportation Research explores integrating communications throughout the research process and introduces new ways to think about communicating the value of research. The report examines the signs of good communications practices, the communication process, planning and evaluating communications efforts, communicating for specific audiences, and case studies on good communication practices within and outside of the transportation community.

Mara Campbell, Organizational Results Director for Missouri DOT, noted, "The most perfectly conducted research isn't much good without an effective communication effort. The Communicating the Value of Transportation Research Guide has helped my

staff identify communication opportunities and challenges even before the first project task is completed. We're in the process of embedding a communication planning worksheet into our work plan process that's based on the contents of the guide. I consider it a 'must read' for everyone on my staff."

An [overview of NCHRP Report 610, Communications Matters: Communicating the Value of Transportation Research](#), is available online. The overview briefly introduces the need, process for, and good practices of integrating communications into transportation research. The full guidance is provided in two companion resources.

The contractor's **Final Report** on the research associated with NCHRP Report 610 was published online as [NCHRP Web-Only Document 131](#). The Final Report contains in-depth guidance, including best practices, quick tips and case studies. A **Workshop** presents the guidance, best practices and templates in an interactive format.

Mia Zmud from NuStats LLC, the Principal Investigators for the study, gave a presentation at the January Conduct of Research (CoR) Committee meeting highlighting the re-

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Communications: State of the Practice

By Kim Linsenmeyer

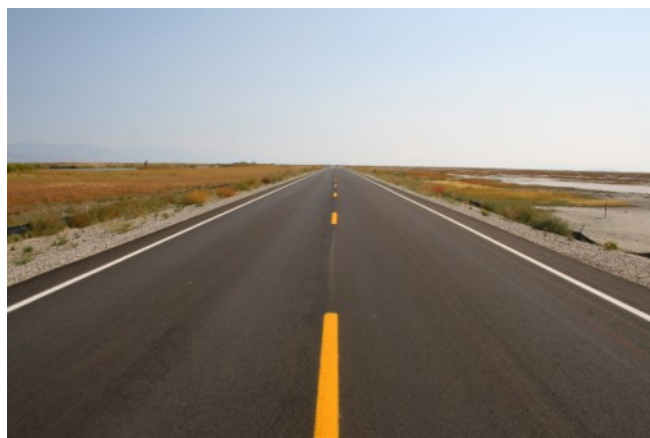
In November 2009, representatives from nine state DOTs and two universities gathered for a peer exchange in Minnesota focused on Communicating the Value of Research. The participants shared both challenges and successes in effectively communicating the value and impact of their research activities. Here we highlight some of the many examples of effective communication pieces and practices being implemented around the country.

Strategic Communications Planning

Effective communications starts with a plan. The following are key insights from the states:

- Create a communications plan. Missouri DOT creates a communication plan for every project as part of the scope of the project. Washington State DOT created a plan that will guide the research program as a whole.
- Work collaboratively with your DOT communications or public affairs office to identify key issues that are important to your audiences and the best timing to reach out to them. (Utah, Missouri)
- Provide internal experts with information and talking points so that they can be the spokespeople for the research program. Help them show where research is making a difference in the work that they do. (Missouri)
- Require investigators to take

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Communicating the Value of Transportation Research Webinar

Reserve your space now for the Communicating the Value of Transportation Research Webinar on Wednesday, **January 27, 2010**; 2:00 PM - 3:30 PM EST. Space is limited. Reserve your Webinar seat now at: <https://www1.gotomeeting.com/register/388944256>

The need for transportation research can be a tough sell to policy makers and the public. Many in the transportation community regard the lack of awareness and knowledge of the value of such research as a major obstacle to securing adequate funding for further advances in safety, mobility, and infrastructure. The approval process for new or continuing research projects requires that the transportation community clearly communicate how these innovations will be applied and how they will affect Americans' lives now and in the future.

This webinar will explore the results of TRB's National Cooperative Highway Research Program (NCHRP) Report 610: Communicating the Value of Transportation Research. Panelists will discuss integrating communications throughout the research process and will provide tips for good communications practices, planning and evaluating communications efforts, and communications geared towards specific audiences.

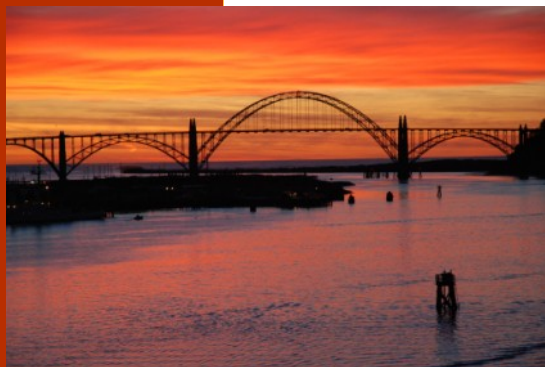
Panelists for this session include:

Johanna Zmud, NuStats (Principle Investigator for Report 610)

Ann Overton, Virginia Transportation Research Council

Teresa Adams, University of Wisconsin-Madison

Moderator for this session: Hau Hagedorn, Oregon Transportation Research & Education Consortium



TRB Executive Director Testifies at House Hearing By Marci Kenney

On November 19, 2009, Robert (Bob) Skinner, Executive Director of TRB, testified before the U.S. House of Representatives' Committee on Science and Technology Subcommittee on Technology and Innovation at a hearing to examine the components of a surface transportation research and development agenda to support the priorities of the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT).

The Executive Director was part of a panel that also included The Honorable Polly Trottenberg (Assistant Secretary for Transportation Policy, U.S. Department of Transportation), The Honorable Peter Appel (RITA Administrator), Mr. Neil J. Pederson (Administrator, Maryland State Highway Administration, and Vice Chair, AASHTO Standing Committee on Highways), Ms. Ann Flemer (Deputy Executive Director Policy, Metropolitan Transportation Commission, Oakland, California), and Mr. Alan Pisarski (Independent Consultant). Bob Skinner's comments were based on recom-

mendations made by committees of experts who were appointed by the National Academies of Science to provide advice to the government. He drew from many TRB special reports, which can be found on the TRB website, including, among others, Special Report 202 America's Highways: Accelerating the Search for Innovation, Special Report 260 Strategic Highway Research: Saving Lives, Reducing Congestion, Improving Quality of Life, Special Report 267 Regulation of Weights, Lengths, and Widths of Commercial Motor Vehicle, Special Report 295 The Federal Investment in Highway Research 2006-2009: Strengths and Weaknesses, Special Report 297 Funding Options for Freight Transportation Projects, and Special Report 298 Driving and the Built Environment: The Effects of Compact Development on Motorized Travel, Energy Use, and CO2 Emissions.

Bob Skinner organized his testimony around the four USDOT strategic goals: safety, livable communities, economic competitiveness, and environmentally sustainable transportation, and identified priority research topics within each of the four areas. In the area of safety, Bob Skinner noted the

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Communications: State of the Practice continued from page 1

video and photos throughout a project so that these materials are available for promoting the results. (Missouri)

Print and Electronic Materials

Print and electronic materials are essential to communicating research information and results. The following are some of the materials used by states that could be added to your communications tool-box:

- Research capsules published when a study begins. ([Louisiana](#))
- Technical summaries or briefs published at the end of a project. ([Connecticut](#), [Louisiana](#), [Minnesota](#), [Missouri](#), [Washington](#))
- Trading cards that highlight specific research projects. (Connecticut, Kansas, Utah)
- Suggestions and templates for doing trading cards are on the [RAC Web site](#).
- Research implementation status reports for executive staff presentations. (Louisiana)
- Technical implementation folios that describe a project's implementation history and quantify the outcomes. ([Louisiana](#))
- Quarterly or monthly newsletters. ([Louisiana](#), [Missouri](#), [Transportation Engineering and Road Research Alliance](#), [Utah](#))
- Online project dashboards that indicate on-time status. Data gets updated when quarterly report information is entered online. ([Illinois](#))
- Videos highlighting research results. (Kansas, [Louisiana](#), Utah)
- Research program brochures and folios. (Kansas, Utah, [Washington](#))
- Annual/biennial research program reports.

([Louisiana](#), [Minnesota](#), [Washington](#), [Illinois](#))

- Press releases and video clips showcasing the impact research is making on the traveling public. (Kansas, Washington, [Utah](#))
- *Advancements* highlighting the great things already discovered at the beginning of a project. ([Missouri](#))
- Dynamic communications using social media such as LinkedIn, Twitter, YouTube, Facebook, RSS feeds and Ning. ([Utah](#))
- Integrating the research program into department performance communications. [Washington State](#) DOT's research program is included in the department's *Gray Notebook* annual summary. See page 115.
- Viral messaging, such as news clips from the library and notes as part of signature lines, to communicate regularly about the benefits of research and the services available. (Washington)
- At-A-Glance project progress foldout chart. ([Minnesota](#))
- Research folios aimed at policy makers that capture the results and recommendations of policy research projects. ([Center for Transportation Studies](#))
- Fact sheets on research projects. ([TERRA](#)).

Outreach meetings, workshops and conference

Lastly, let's not forget the importance of sharing the results of your research through face to face interactions. These are some of the ways states are getting out their research:

- Hold a large conference annually or every other year to present research results. Include internal and external participants.

([Louisiana](#), [CTS](#))

- Draft articles on project results for researchers to review, edit and submit for publication. (Kansas)
- Sponsor a quarterly seminar series that focuses on one research result or technology being implemented. Invite internal and external stakeholders. ([Louisiana](#))
- Hold monthly or quarterly webinars to present research activities and findings. ([California](#) and Washington)
- Sponsor scan tours to support broader implementation of successful practices, tools and technologies. Send industry representatives and project managers to other states to learn and return with implementation confidence. ([Utah](#))
- Distribute flash drives at conferences with sample data and program information. ([TERRA](#))
- Hold a Research Open House in the lobby of the building that includes speakers, videos, handouts and interactive opportunities. (Washington)
- Present research projects at university engineering conferences. (Kansas)
- Plan brown bag lunches to talk about research projects (what's happening, recent results and implementation efforts). (California, Minnesota)

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Upcoming Events

- **January 10-14, 2010.** [89th Annual TRB Meeting](#). Washington, DC
- **January 27, 2010.** [TRB Webinar: Communicating the Value of Transportation Research](#)
- **May 19, 2010.** [Toward Better Freight Transportation Data: A Research Road Map](#). Irvine, California
- **May 19, 2010.** [Fourth International Conference on Financing Surface Transportation in the U.S.-Forging a Sustainable Future -NOW!-Call for Presentations](#). New Orleans, Louisiana
- **June 21-24, 2010.** [North American Travel Monitoring Exposition and Conference \(NATMEC\)](#). Seattle, WA
- **July 11, 2010.** [2010 TRB Joint Summer Meeting](#). Minneapolis, Minnesota



Communicating the Value of Transportation Research

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sults of the NCHRP Study on Communicating the Value of Research (NCHRP Project 20-78). The idea for the NCHRP study came from the AASHTO Standing Committee on Research (SCOR) as part of its preparations for the new authorization.

The goal of the NCHRP study was to produce an empirically-based guidebook on communicating the value of research. Communications Matters: Communicating the Value of Transportation Research is the culmination of this research project. The guide is intended for use by state and federal transportation officials and their research managers as well as others in the transportation research community, and contains practical advice on how to communicate the results and return on investment that research programs produce for Congress, state lawmakers and other decision makers.

The material in the guide is based on best practices from other fields, such as medical research, as well as from several transportation-related case studies, and a review of the transportation research community's experience with SAFETEA-LU. It covers the elements of good communication practices, the communication process, evaluation and feedback, and targeting specific audiences. The guide includes quick tips, detailed how-to descriptions, and useful resources and templates. The guidance is not intended to make communications experts out of practitioners, but to build their communication awareness and skills so their programs become more successful.

One key point the study makes is the importance of integrating communication at the onset of research planning. At that stage, important communication objectives can be established and serve as a starting point for subsequent planning to ensure support for research and bring outcomes to fruition. Successful communication links researchers and results with their intended audience

(s) by strengthening the information flow throughout the research process. For this reason, the report recommends engaging communications professionals early in the research process. Taking research communications seriously means building the communications skills of researchers but also providing resources to support and enhance the communication capacity at the onset and throughout a research effort. Communications professionals can help researchers understand their audience, frame their message, use proper communications channels and presentation styles. Ideally, two-way communication between the researchers and their intended audience can help ensure that the research meets intended needs, and increase the likelihood of implementation. Ongoing communication brings a network of researchers, decision-makers, and other stakeholders together and helps build lasting relationships.

A pilot workshop on NCHRP 20-78 was sponsored by Minnesota DOT on November 2 in conjunction with its Research Peer Exchange. Approximately 30 participants from State DOTs and university research programs attended the workshop led by Kim Hilsenbeck of NuStats and Tim Lomax, from the Texas Transportation Institute. One of the most valuable parts of the program was a small group exercise in which participants selected an actual communications problem and walked through the steps contained in the guide. A second workshop is scheduled for December at FHWA's Turner-Fairbank Highway Research Center.

In addition, the Conduct of Research Committee and Technology Transfer Committee are cosponsoring a TRB Workshop on Communicating the Value of Research and Accelerating Innovation Implementation for Transportation Professionals. The workshop will be presented at the Shoreham Hotel from 1:30 to 4:30 on Sunday, January 10, as part of the TRB Annual Meeting and will feature work from NCHRP Project 20-78

"Communicating the Value of Research," as well as the NHI course, "Leap Not Creep: Accelerating Innovation Implementation".

Transportation professionals who attend the workshop will learn to overcome typical communication challenges and institute best-practice activities in the research process, which results in successfully conveying the value of research to key audiences and leads to innovation.

To begin the program Ann M. Overton, Virginia Transportation Research Council, will lead with "What Works in Communicating Transportation Research: View from the Field"; Kim Hilsenbeck, NuStats LLC, will introduce the NCHRP project with "Communicating the Value of Research: Overview", and an "Introduction to National Highway Institute Course Leap Not Creep: Accelerating Innovation" will be given by Joe Conway, Federal Highway Administration. In addition, a panel of practitioners will share innovation success stories, including: Finding the Spotlight by CoR Committee Member Leni (Ellen) Oman, Washington State Department of Transportation; Innovation Success Story: Creating and Sustaining Innovation Culture at Utah Department of Transportation by Rukhsana Kahn Lindsey and Jim McMinimee, Utah Department of Transportation; Moving from Research to Services for Traveling Public: Unique Public-Private Partnership Path by Thomas West, California Center for Innovative Transportation.

The workshop is open to anyone interested. Committee members and friends are encouraged to attend. The cost is included in your TRB registration. Pre-registration is not required. Just come prepared to learn!

Marci is retired from FHWA, a Friend of the Conduct of Research Committee, & served on the NCHRP study 20-78 panel. You can contact her at: bluejay7879@yahoo.com

Benefits of Attending TRB

By Marci Kenney

If you are having difficulty convincing your management of the benefits of attending the TRB annual meeting, consider this, "The Utah Department of Transportation has realized more than \$3.8 million in savings for every UDOT employee who has attended a TRB Annual Meeting since 2003, savings that have far surpassed the cost to UDOT of regularly sending their staff to the meeting."

The Research Division of the UDOT Project Development Group has developed and implemented a process for tracking the benefits to the Department that come from UDOT personnel's attendance at the TRB Annual Meeting. The process consists of the following main steps:

1. Attendees are strategically selected;
2. A preconference coordination meeting conveys UDOT's expectation that each at-

- tendee will return from the meeting with at least two ideas for implementation;
3. Attendees meet during the Annual Meeting to share ideas and coordinate efforts;
4. Attendees take notes on presentations and meetings;
5. Written summaries of implementable ideas are provided by attendees to the research division at a post-conference meeting;
6. Attendees' ideas are presented to UDOT executive management, including implementation plans and summaries of expected benefits and savings;
7. Quarterly reports are submitted by attendees to the research division on the progress made in implementing their ideas, including actual cost savings to UDOT; and
8. The research division compiles a master spreadsheet and tracks the implementation of ideas for all UDOT attendees (beginning in 2003).

Since the tracking process began in 2003, UDOT has implemented 136 innovative ideas relating to contracting methods, safety improvements, accelerated bridge construction, and other areas and has realized more than \$189 million dollars in actual savings.

Additional information on the tracking process is included in an article in the November/December 2009 issue of the TR News, TRB's bimonthly magazine. Or listen to the [Benefits of Attending the TRB Annual Meeting for the Utah DOT podcast](#). Read more about [The Benefits of Attending the TRB Annual Meeting: Utah Department of Transportation's Experience](#) online.

Marci is retired from FHWA and is a Friend of the TRB Conduct of Research Committee. You can contact her at: bluejay7879@yahoo.com

CoR Guide to TRB

Sunday, January 10, 2010

9:00AM- 12:00PM Everything You Need to Know About Web 2.0: Using Communication and Collaboration to Improve Transportation; *Marriott*

1:30PM- 4:30PM Communicating the Value of Research and Accelerating Innovation Implementation for Transportation Professionals; *Shoreham*

1:30PM- 4:30PM International Transportation Research Collaboration: Success Stories; *Hilton*

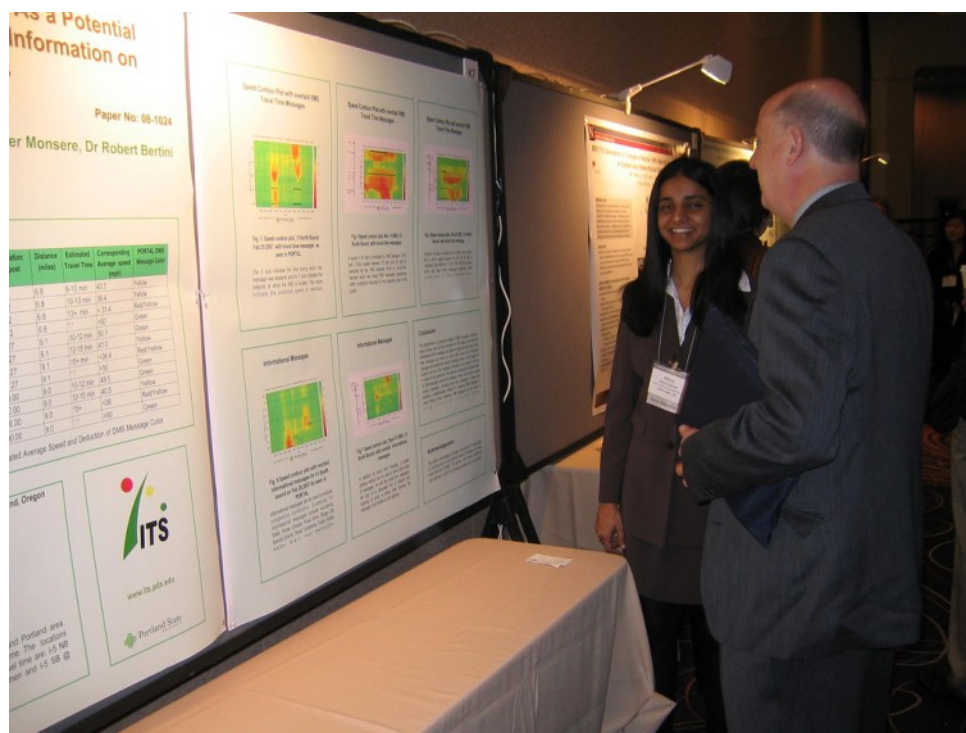
Monday, January 11, 2010

3:45PM- 5:30PM ABG10 Conduct of Research Committee; *Marriott*

Wednesday, January 13, 2010

9:30AM- 12:00PM Innovative Applications of Social Media and Web 2.0 Technologies in Transportation Research and Communication *Hilton*

2:30PM- 4:00PM Eureka! Build Breakthrough Research Programs for Transformative Results *Marriott*



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need for research on driver behavior, large truck safety, enforcement, and incremental high speed rail. With regard to livability, more research is needed on how to best design transit-oriented development to reduce auto trips. In particular, he noted that we need a much better understanding of the density thresholds necessary to support different levels of transit (bus, trolley, bus rapid transit, light rail, heavy rail) and how they would vary across metropolitan areas of different size, employment concentration, and mixes of land use.

To support economic competitiveness, more research is needed to support the construction, operation, and maintenance of public infrastructure. In addition, there is a need to develop the capacity to rigorously analyze public-private investments in transportation projects, including freight and maritime

projects, in order to protect the public interest, and more research is needed on funding options for transportation projects to identify alternatives to the fuel tax.

Bob Skinner also noted that the TRB Research and Technology Coordinating Committee (RTCC) recommended continuation of the state planning and research (SP&R) provisions of Title I of SAFETEA-LU. These programs fund investigation of state-specific research topics, provide much of the local match for the University Transportation Centers Program, fund the collaborative, pooled fund National Cooperative Highway Research Program, and support technology transfer and adoption of innovation.

Finally, in the area of environmentally sustainable transportation, TRB recommends the authorization of research programs to help mitigate transportation's contribution to climate change and adapt transportation infrastructure

to climate change.

The testimony will contribute to the reauthorization of the surface transportation bill, H.R. 2569. This was the third transportation hearing held by the subcommittee in the 111th Congress. The first hearing looked at the need to bring better planning and coordination to the DOT surface transportation research agenda. The second examined the research needed to mitigate the impact of the surface transportation system on the climate. For more information or to view the complete witness statements, go to: http://science.house.gov/Publications/hearings/markups_details.aspx?NewsID=2678

Marci is retired from FHWA and is a Friend of the TRB Conduct of Research Committee. You can contact her at: bluejay7879@yahoo.com



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- Host an Innovation Series event to feature research, demonstrate technology, discuss partnerships and highlight innovation. (TERRA)

For more information about the communication approaches featured above, please contact the following peer exchange participants.

- [Susan Barker](#), Kansas Department of Transportation
- [Rebecca Boyer](#), California Department of Transportation
- [Mara Campbell](#), Missouri Department of Transportation
- [Michael Fazio](#), Utah Department of Transportation
- [Maureen Jensen](#), Transportation Engineering and Road Research Alliance

- [Mark Morvant](#), Louisiana Transportation Research Center
- [Dinny Oliveira](#), Connecticut Department of Transportation
- [Leni Oman](#), Washington State Department of Transportation
- [Linda Preisen](#), Center for Transportation Studies
- [Amy Schutzbach](#), Illinois Department of Transportation
- [Linda Taylor](#), Minnesota Department of Transportation

Kim, COO of CTC & Associates LLC, facilitated and documented Mn/DOT's Communicating the Value of Research peer exchange. You can contact her at kim.linsenmayer@ctcandassociates.com

From the Chair

Greetings of the season to all of our Conduct of Research Committee members and friends! The holidays remind me that while we are closing out the calendar year, we can look forward to an exciting 2010, beginning with the Transportation Research Board's Annual Meeting just a few weeks away.

Certainly let me encourage you all to attend the Annual Meeting and of course our committee meeting which will be held on Monday, January 11, 2010, from 3:45-5:30 p.m. in the Marriott Hotel. For many years we've been meeting in the Hilton, but this year there are substantial renovations in that hotel which make it necessary for us to meet in the Marriott. So, note the change of venue on your schedules.

Our committee's Goal Groups' Chairs are working to advance their areas of consideration. Thank you Mike Bonini, Pat Casey, Deb Elston, Gary Frederick, Hau Hagedorn, and Sue Sillick. Are you involved in one of the goal groups? Whether you are a committee member or friend or want to be a friend of the committee, if you aren't yet active, let me invite you to join us. Come to the committee meeting, and see where you can lend your expertise as well as benefit from your association with transportation research management colleagues.

The committee is benefiting from the results of our mid-year meeting and the continuing tireless work of committee members. David Kuehn capably handled the paper review process for the committee and shepherded three papers we received to be included in poster sessions and a presentation session. The presentation session David will moderate. Be sure to put this on your meeting schedule, Wednesday January 13, 2:30-4:00 p.m., Session #671, "Eureka, Build Breakthrough Research Programs for Transformative Results."

There are a number of opportunities to become better informed about how new

media can benefit transportation research. Jason Bittner, committee co-chair, will moderate a workshop #103 "Everything you need to know about web 2.0: Using communication and collaboration to improve transportation." I want to be smarter about this topic, so Jason, and the participants of this session, will bring me more up-to-speed – I hope many of you will join me at this workshop. It's free, and I'm sure it will be very beneficial. To complement this workshop, later in the week, stop by Session #639, "Innovative Applications of Social Media and Web 2.0 Technologies in Transportation Research and Communication."

The committee is sponsoring other sessions that I'm sure you will want to attend. Have you used the interactive program on the TRB website? It is a great tool to locate the items you will want to attend. From the main website <http://www.trb.org>, just click on the "annual meeting" dropdown menu, "program." The search tool is very capable and searching by our committee number ABG10, it will bring up all our activities. As a quick reference, these are also listed on page 5 of the newsletter. Join with me in congratulating Dave Huft, a former committee member and continuing friend, for being awarded the TRB W. N. Carey, Jr. distinguished service award which will be presented at the Annual Meeting Chairman's Luncheon.

On behalf of the committee, I'd like to thank Hau Hagedorn and the newsletter contributors, Marci Kenney and Kim Linsenmayer. We enjoy a professionally created and expertly informed newsletter. In fact, thanks to Mark Norman, TRB Technical Activities Director who is our committee TRB staff representative, our most recent edition was highlighted and linked in the internationally distributed TRB e-newsletter as an item for being "In the know" and the FHWA included a link to our newsletter in its widely distributed "FHWA R&T Now."



I know many in the transportation research community are experiencing the effects of these turbulent times and the recession. Also, transportation must become better, faster, cheaper, safer, greener, and have less impact on the users. How does transportation research serve this mandate? The Harvard Business Review often has articles by one of my favorite business authors, Rosabeth Moss Kanter. In the November issue she discussed what Peter Drucker (another favorite business management guru) would say about these times.... Drucker tends to ask simple but profoundly relevant questions, "What is your mission? What should you stop doing? Where has the drive for short-term efficiencies undermined long-term effectiveness? What should be your objectives and guiding principles?" As we look to 2010, I trust that we can think about these questions in relation to transportation research. Knowing the expertise and talent among our committee members and friends, I'm sure our collective contribution will produce a sum that is greater than all of our individual efforts. I look forward to working with Jason, my co-chair, and you all this coming year.

Barbara

Barbara is Principal of B. T. Harder, Inc. You can contact her at: btharder@verizon.net



About COR

The Conduct of Research Committee ABG10 serves to increase the quality and effectiveness of transportation research by supporting and facilitating improved research planning and management processes. It promotes improved coordination between those who sponsor and conduct research and those who implement research products. It assists the Transportation Research Board in its role of stimulating research and serving as a national clearinghouse for research activities. For more information, visit us at: <http://www.mrutc.org/COR>

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The opinions expressed in this newsletter are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Transportation Research Board or the National Academies of Science. If you have content suggestions or would like to contribute to future newsletters, please contact Hau Hagedorn at hagedorn@pdx.edu.